

Remediation of Aluminum Wiring

Aluminum wiring was used extensively in homes built between 1969 – 1976. Aluminum was chosen over copper because of price. Copper prices were at an all-time high. The construction industry was looking for cheaper materials and aluminum wire was the next best conductor available.

Aluminum wiring on its own is not dangerous. The problem lies with the connection or junction points. It just requires special connectors, but those connectors can oxidize or rust. When these connection points oxidize, the connection becomes weak causing electrical hazards and possibly fire.

If you have aluminum wiring, you can deal with it without replacing your wiring. Rewiring your home can cost thousands of dollars, but by using a process called pig-tailing, the concerns of aluminum wiring can be resolved. Pig Tailing refers to a process whereby you attach a 6 inch copper wire to the end of the existing aluminum wire and attach it to the wire using a special marrette (connector). This is VERY IMPORTANT – not all connectors are created equally and the common connector you can buy at your local home improvement big box store is not rated for this. Using these standard connectors is WRONG and you will fail your house inspection. What you need is a special type of marrette that is for use with mixed materials (aluminum and copper).

Helpful Tip – If you need to update your wiring by installing pig tails now is a great time to get all new matching light switches and outlets. They all have to be removed for the pig tailing process so installing new ones will only add the cost of the receptacles themselves.

It is recommended to use a licensed electrician to do aluminum to copper pig tailing. Hiring a licensed electrician can ensure that any other electrical issues can be spotted and rectified quickly. This can save you the extra labour costs of a separate service call later.

Contact your insurance provider to check their policies, most insurance companies are refusing to insure homes with aluminum wiring. Hiring a licensed electrician to perform the remediation and inspection ensures it meets all current electrical codes in your area. This satisfies most insurance providers and the home can then be insured. NOTE, if you do the work yourself, you can't get certification required by insurance companies.

We encourage you to inspect your home to see if you suspect aluminum wiring get your home inspected immediately by qualified electrician. You'll greatly reduce the chance of electrical hazard and fire, and you'll rest easier knowing your electrical system meets modern electrical code requirements. You'll be safer and have more peace of mind if you address wiring issues as soon as possible.